DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 343 239 EA 023 783

AUTHOR Goddard, J. Tim
TITLE A Model of School Improvement within a First Nations Environment.
PUB DATE Jan 92
NOTE 28p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (5th, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, January 2-5, 1992).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Canada Natives; Curriculum Development; Educational Improvement; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; *Minority Groups; Models; Personnel Evaluation; Student Promotion
IDENTIFIERS *Cree (Tribe); *Saskatchewan; Tribally Controlled Education

ABSTRACT

Native education has often been perceived as a low status cousin of the "regular" (that is, middle class, suburban, white) education system, and the achievement levels of Indian students have historically been low. This situation is often attributed to the past policies of many different federal governments and to a succession of poorly conceived and badly implemented school programs. The anger and distrust generated by these programs were among many reasons that led to the development of Band-controlled education systems in the early 1970s. The Lac La Ronge Indian Band operates the largest Band-controlled education system in Saskatchewan. With a membership of 5,000, of whom 25 percent are aged 9 years or younger, the Band is facing unprecedented growth in the need for educational services. A model for school improvement that involves community groups in the developmental process and identifies areas of concern has been developed and implemented. This paper describes issues relating to staff evaluation, curriculum development, student promotion, referral to resource room programs, and maintaining the cultural and linguistic uniqueness of the Cree Nation. (45 references) (LAP)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED343239

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Tim Goddard

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

A MODEL OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT WITHIN A FIRST NATIONS ENVIRONMENT

J. TIM GODDARD

EA 023 783

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A MODEL OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT WITHIN A FIRST NATIONS ENVIRONMENT

A paper presented to the Fifth Annual International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement, 1992

Victoria, British Columbia : January 2-5, 1992

J. Tim Goddard
Superintendent of Education, Lac La Ronge Indian Band,
P.O. Box 480,
La Ronge
Saskatchewan SOJ 1LO

Telephone (306) 425-2813 : FAX (306) 425-2590

ABSTRACT

The Lac La Ronge indian Band operates the largest Band controlled education system in Saskatchewan. With a membership of 5000, of whom 25% are aged 9 years or younger, the Band is facing unprecedented growth in the need for educational services. A model for school improvement which involves community groups in the developmental process and identifies areas of concern has been developed and implemented. The paper describes issues relating to staff evaluation, curriculum development, student promotion, referral to resource room programs, and maintaining the cultural and linguistic uniqueness of the Cree Nation.

In all societies the knowledge, values and beliefs of that society are transmitted from the old to the young through a process known as education. In many contemporary societies this transmission is controlled and legitimized by compulsory attendance at the institution known as school, a process which generally results in the maintenance of the status quo. In most unicultural societies this process is not problematic. All the players (community, students, teachers) agree on the type and scope of cultural information which should be transmitted. In contemporary multicultural societies the process is also workable insofar as that, in theory at least, systems can be established to ensure that all groups have their say in what cultural values should be taught in schools.

In both these instances the efficiency and effectiveness considerations described by Bacchus (1987) have been met. He argues that the nation-state allocates it's resources in order to provide the "best combination of input factors into the system which is likely to maximize learning outcomes" (Bacchus, 1987, p.2). This is the efficiency criterion. Bacchus also posits that the "knowledge, skills and attitudes ... obtained or developed as a result of their formal education" (Bacchus, 1987, p.2) are of value to the students who complete the school program and to society as a whole. These are the effectiveness considerations.

In some instances, however, a third situation exists. Here a unicultural (and, often, unilingual) society exists within the sphere of influence of a larger, multicultural, multilingual and dominant society. Such is the case with Canada's Native peoples, or First Nations.

Where a separate society exists in geographical, economic, social, cultural and linguistic isolation from the dominant group then acculturation, whether forced or inadvertent, is an ever present threat to the minority group. Over the past 100 years the education system in Canada has been used as a vehicle to transmit the knowledge, values and beliefs of the dominant society to the young people of the distinct societies of the First Nations. The resulting dilemma which faces the peoples of the First Nations is both simple and complex. Simple, in that ways must be found to maintain cultural identity while simultaneously providing children with the skills needed to succeed within the dominant society. Complex, because the governance of political, economic, educational and other societal institutions which serve the First Nations has traditionally been vested in the dominant society which has been attempting to acculturate those same First Nations into the mainstream.

Indian education practices in the pre-contact era "centred around the teaching of life skills, culture and customs that would prepare Indian youth to assume their future roles in their societies" (Watson & Watson, 1983, p.1). The colonialization of Canada by the European settler led to extreme social dysfunction among aboriginal society and to the imposition of a foreign education system. This attempt to force the educational precepts of the dominant society on to the Indian peoples was doomed to failure.

The fact that "education and schooling are designed to equip the students to live and work in their own society" (Kouris, 1983, p.3) produces a dysfunctional situation when the cultural norms, values and belief structures of the dominant society which designs the education system are different from those of the society to whom that education is being delivered. It has been noted that "a country's educational system is inescapably part of its social, political, and economic substance ... Educational systems built upon foreign social and economic systems cannot maintaintheir viability for long" (Giles & Proudfoot, 1984, p.4). As First Nations began to take greater control of their own affairs so this viability threshold was reached and then breached.

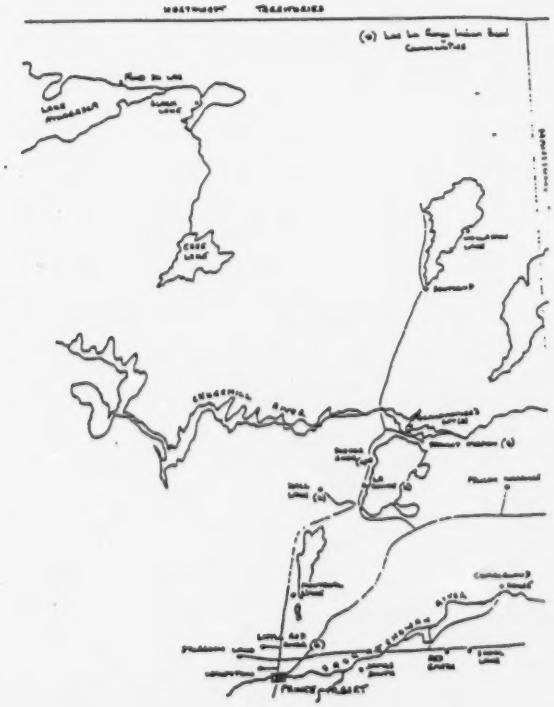
In the field of Indian education the breaching of the viability threshold took place on 23 November, 1973. On that day "Treasury Board regulation 715985 ... extended to band councils the authority to manage in-school educational programs" (Scharf et al, 1987, p. 47). For the first time since the pre-contact era Indian peoples were once again in a position to govern and control the educational process in their communities.

The structure of the political, social, economic and educational governance of Indian people in Saskatchewan can be considered as being triangular in shape (see Figure 1). At the apex is the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations [FSIN] whose officers are elected by the All-Chiefs Council. The next layer of the triangle is a series of Tribal Councils, each consisting of a number of First Nations in a clearly defined geographic area. The officers of the Tribal Councils are elected by the Chiefs of the individual Bands which are represented in that Tribal Council. At the base of the triangle, supporting the rest of the structure, are the individual First Nations.

Figure 1 : First Nations governance in Saskatchewan

The Lac La Ronge Indian Band [LLRIB] is one of the twelve First Nations which constitute the Prince Albert Tribal Council [PATC]. The PATC represents some 25000 status or treaty Indians (Goldade, 1991) living in north-eastern Saskatchewan (see Figure 2). As part of the Woodlands and Stoney Cree Indian Nation the members of the LLRIB speak the 'th' dialect of the Cree language. They are joined in the PATC by other 'th' Bands and by members of the Chipewyan (Dene), Swampy Cree, Lakota (Sioux) and Plains Cree Nations.

Figure 2 : Distribution of First Nations in north-eastern Saskatchewan



The membership of the LLRIB constitutes almost 20% of the total membership of the PATC. The majority of the 4832 members of the Lac La Ronge Indian Band (INAC, 1991) live in six reserve communities in Northern Saskatchewan. Other LLRIB members live off-reserve in various towns and cities, or in other reserve communities. The LLRIB operates seven Band controlled schools with a total Nursery - Grade 12 student population of 956 (Goddard, 1991b). This is the largest Band controlled school system in Saskatchewan and is comparable, in size, to many provincial School Divisions. There are almost 4000 students enrolled in First Nations schools within the PATC (Goldade, 1991) and so the LLRIB accounts for approximately one quarter of the total enrolment. With 50% of the Band population being under 21 years of age, and 24.83% being 9 years of age or younger (Campbell, 1991), the student enrolment in LLRIB schools is expected to increase significantly over the next decade.

Native education has often been perceived as a low status cousin of the 'regular' (i.e. middle class, (sub)urban, white) education system. More (1984) has noted that "the academic achievement levels of Indian students are not declining but continue to be disastrously low ... massive improvements in the quality of education of Indian students is absolutely essential" (pp.3-4). This situation is often attributed to the past policies of many different federal governments and to a succession of poorly conceived and badly implemented school programs. Anger and distrust generated by these programs were among the many reasons which led to the development of Band-controlled education systems in the early 1970s (Goddard, 1988). The LLRIB took control of the Chief James Roberts School in Sucker River in 1973 (Roberts & Goddard, 1991) and of other schools shortly afterward. The LLRIB now operates seven schools of various sizes, ranging from a small multigraded Nursey-Grade 8 program with an enrolment of 38 students to a large Nursery-Grade 12 facility with an enrolment of 403 students.

The definition of each school as 'large' or 'small' is, of course, relative to the other schools with which comparisons are being made. Utilizing the definition developed by the Newfoundland Department of Education, in which 'small' schools are those "K-9 schools [where the] mean grade enroment is 12 or less ... [and] any school with high school subjects [where the] mean grade enrolment is 25 or less" (Cutler, 1989, p.3), four LLRIB schools can be considered as 'small' schools. The delivery of educational services to these smaller schools requires a more flexible approach than that required to deliver an equivalent program in larger schools. Any plan to improve the schools within a system must take into account those differences in such

areas as staffing ratios, multigraded classrooms, per-pupil expenditures and so forth. The Band must also be cognizent of the diversity of communities extant on the reserves. In the larger centres there is a primarily English as a first language environment. In the smaller and more isolated communities the vernacular language is Cree and English as a second language teaching strategies must be implemented.

Some years ago the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations noted that First Nations wished to "create, control and evaluate their own comprehensive system of education as an expression of their aboriginal rights as a distinct peoples" (Saskatchewan Indian Education Act, 1984, p.1). Chief Ovide Mercredi of the Assembly of First Nations has reiterated that "education is an inherant aboriginal right and a treaty right" (Mercredi, 1991). The LLRIB concurs and believes that, as such, education should be fully funded on an 'actual-cost recovery' basis. This is not the case, however, and the funding formula by which Indian education is financed is still established in Ottawa and remains subject to interpretation at the national, regional, and district offices of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada [INAC], to wastage by having to pass through a large bureaucracy, and to federally imposed constraints on expenditure at the Band level.

The LLRIB has direct responsibility for the N-12 education program offered on reserve. As INAC appears to be abdicating its responsibilities in other areas so the education branch is also concerned with post-secondary education, adult skills training and academic upgrading, and the provision of counselling and support services to students enrolled in provincial, federal or other Band schools, group homes, boarding homes and residential school programs. This requires the use of program funding to develop capacity in areas which are outside the mandate of the funding formula but which are, nontheless, considered to be an integral part of the education program. First Nations are therefore faced with the problem of raising academic standards among an ever growing student population while receiving a diminishing amount of funding for this purpose. This has required Bands to identify needs and to prioritize which strategies should be implemented.

In September 1990, education personnel from the Prince Albert Tribal Council [PATC] and the LLRIB commenced planning for a District Wide School Improvement Project [DWIP]. This project involved 22 Band operated schools within the 12 First Nations who constitute the PATC. A community based development model was utilized to ensure that the content of the school and

community surveys was based on local concerns, needs and perceptions of what constitutes a good school(PATC, 1990). Initially, a wide cross-section of people interested in education (parents, school committee members, teachers, Band councillors, in-school administrators, etc.) were brought together at a meeting hosted by PATC. This group discussed the issue of effective schools and identified those factors which were commonly agreed to be present in an effective school within a First Nations environment. A small steering committee, comprising of the Assistant Director of Education and four educational consultants from PATC, this author and a Sioux educator employed by the Wahpeton Band, then examined a number of other models (i.e. British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1990; National Study of School Evaluation, 1983; Onion Lake Indian Band, 1990; Saskatchewan Education, 1989) and structured the Needs Assessment Survey questionnaires. The community representatives then took these documents to be reviewed at the community level to clarify statements, remove jargon and compile a standardized Cree, Dene or Sioux translation of certain terms and concepts.

As a result of these discussions a second draft was prepared and was once again presented to the community representatives for their consideration, review and revision. A final revised draft was then prepared by the steering committee. This draft was approved by a second joint meeting of the community representatives and the final documents were then produced. In order to facilitate the process the Chief and Council of the LLRIB agreed to pilot the DWIP needs assessment process prior to its implementation throughout the PATC area. The revised draft of the DWIP survey was administered by the Band in April 1991. A total of 550 Needs Assessment surveys were distributed to parents, senior students, teachers and other education staff, Band Councillors and School Committee members. A full day school closure was authorized by the Chief and Council to facilitate completion of the surveys.

School staff, after completing their own questionnaires, then went door-to-door in their communities and assisted parents and community members in the completion of their surveys. 334 completed surveys were returned for a response rate of 60.72%. An analysis of the surveys was conducted by the Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit. This analysis provided a statistical breakdown of the responses, highlighted those questions where there was a significant difference between responses from the various staff / parent / student / school committee groups, and produced 67 pages of direct written comments which had been included in the responses. The results of the analysis were debated at the annual LLRIB School Committees

Conference and twelve major concerns were identified and discussed (see Table 1). A School Improvement Review Committee, with representation from a variety of stakeholder groups, was then established to review these concerns and to develop strategies to improve the LLRIB education program.

Table 1 : Concerns identified through the DWIP process*

(i) Teacher evaluation and supervision
(ii) Communication between classroom and resource room teachers
(iii) High drop-out rates
(iv) Status of Cree language and Cree culture programs
(v) General lack of appropriate curriculum development
(vi) Lack of consistent expectations for student performance
(vii) Lack of comparison with other educational systems
(viii) Special education programs
(ix) Need for additional trained support staff
(x) Centralization of the budget process
(xi) Insufficient levels of educational funding
(xii) Isolation of individual School Committees

* These concerns are neither prioritized nor listed in any order of significance

The area of teacher evaluation and supervision was one area of concern. A clinical supervision model, such as that described by Castetter (1986, p.323) and Hyman (1986, pp. 65-159), requires a great deal of time if it is to be successful. This process tends to utilize a check list format and does not provide teachers with the means of identifying and remediating their own professional needs. Teachers were not given the opportunity to reflect upon their practice nor to focus on the uniqueness of each individual classroom. The clinical model was utilized primarily as an evaluative tool by central office administrators and was perceived by teachers as being a controlling device to monitor their behaviour. The use of critical reflection and the treatment of teachers as individuals (Sparkes, 1991) was often ignored in favour of "the fiction" that evaluation denoted expertise on the part of the evaluator (Smith & Blase, 1991, p. 18) and, as

such, was viewed as a necessary evil by most teachers and not as a means to improve pedagogical practice. Working on a variant of the non-directive, collaborative and directive model of supervision (Glickman, 1989) a three-strand approach to teacher evaluation was developed and implemented in LLRIB schools in September 1991. The drive behind this model was the need to implement a process which provided the Band with the information necessary to determine the continuation or termination of a teachers' employment. Unlike provincial systems, the LLRIB does not offer tenure to its teachers but rather works on a series of renewable one-year contracts. Simultaneously the Band wanted to provide experienced teachers with a means to improve their professional skills in an autonomous manner.

The first strand (see Figure 3) involves the clinical supervision model and is compulsory for all teachers who are in their first year of employment with LLRIB. A teacher who may also be nominated for this strand if the principal and/or the Superintendent feel that close supervision is required. Also, a teacher may select the clinical model if s/he so desires.

Figure 3 : The clinical supervision model

STRAND 1	SUMMATIVE EVALUATION
Purpose -	to provide a written, formal evaluation report. This report may be used to supplement a job application and shall be kept on the teacher's personal file.
Process -	at least three (3) formal classroom visits by a supervisor. This will include at least two (2) visits by the school principal and/or vice-principal, together with at least one (1) visit by the Superintendent of Education.
Procedure -	completion of an approved evaluation checklist and anecdotal report at the end of each visit. Conferences with the teacher before and after each visit. Completion of a summative report after the third visit. Conference with the teacher to present the summative report.
Eligibility -	Required for all teachers in their first year with the LLRIB. Required for those teachers who are nominated by the principal or Superintendent of Education. Required for all teachers who have not had a summative evaluation in any of the past 4 years. Optional for teachers who do not wish to choose strand 2 or strand 3.
Principal's role -	Evaluator
Superintendent of Education's role	- Evaluator and writer of summative report.

The second strand (see Figure 4) is a collaborative model which utlizes a teacher-designated observer, who is usually a colleague, to assist the teacher in achieving his/her goals.

Figure 4 : The collaborative model

STRAND 2 SELF-DIRECTED OBSERVATION

Purpose - to provide professional development for experienced teachers.

Process - at least three (3) observations during the year, by a supervisor or colleague as designated by the teacher. The teacher, principal, and designated observer shall meet before 30 September and develop an action plan which outlines the teacher's perceived needs. At least three (3) observational visits will be scheduled during the year. In May, the teacher, principal, and designated observer shall meet to discuss achievement of the goals outlined in the action plan.

Procedure - in a pre-conference, the teacher indicates what specific teaching skill(s) s/he wishes to be observed. The observer focusses only on what the teacher has requested; feedback and comments are provided in the post-conference.

Eligibility - all teachers who have completed at least one year with LLRIB and who have not been nominated for strand 1 and who have not chosen strand 3.

Principal's role - facilitator

NOTE: - no summative evaluation is prepared. The teacher shall prepare a report, countersigned by the principal and designated observer, which describes the success of the observation process and the achievement of goals. A teacher/principal who selects this strand may elect a colleague or the Superintendent of Education to act as his/her advisor.

The third strand (see Figure 5) is a self-directed model of professional development which can address any aspect of the teacher's work. A timeline (see Figure 6) was also developed to summarize the tasks required and to present due dates by which specific activities must be completed. The initial reaction of teachers to this model has been positive and it is hoped that evaluation based primarily on professional issues and development will be a successful alternative to the clinical model.

Figure 5 : The self-directed model

STRAND 3 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Purpose - to provide experienced teachers with the means to identify and achieve their own professional development needs.

Process - together with the principal, the teacher shall establish aims and goals for his/her own professional development. This meeting shall occur before 30 September. In November and March, the teacher shall meet with the principal and discuss progress on the personal plan. In May, the teacher shall meet with the principal and review achievement of the aims and goals of the plan.

Procedure - the teacher shall develop a personal plan. This may include such goals as: (i) attend relevant workshops and /or conferences; (ii) perform action research on a topic relevant to the teaching assignment; (iii) write articles for educational journals; (iv) develop personal skills in a particular teaching area; (v) adapt a provincial syllabus to local needs; (vi) prepare a text or other resource materials in a particular curriculum area; and so forth.

Eligibility - all teachers who have completed at least one year with the LLRIB, who have not been nominated for strand 1 and who have not chosen strand 2.

Principal's role - facilitator

NOTE: - no summative evaluation is prepared. The teacher shall prepare a report, countersigned by the principal, which describes the success of the process and the achievement of goals. A principal who selects this strand may elect a colleague or the Superintendent of Education to act as his/her advisor.

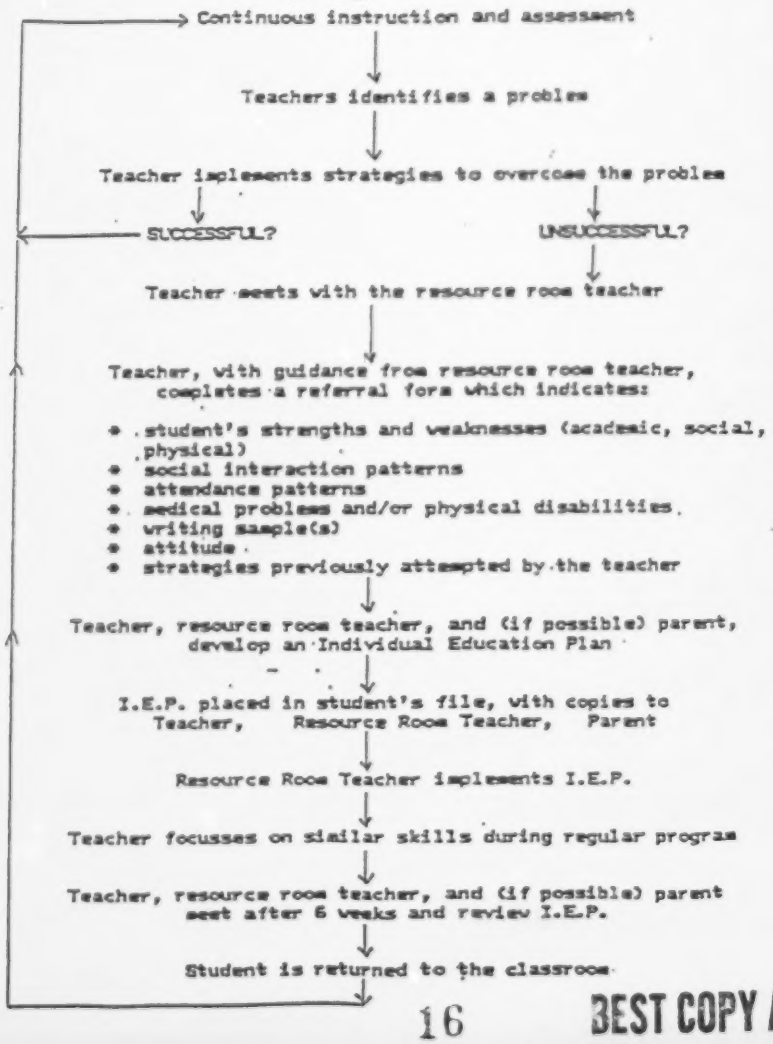
Figure 6 : The timeline

Timeline for teachers

AUGUST	Orientation: discussion of alternative processes; meet with principal; select appropriate strand		
SEPTEMBER	Strand 1	Strand 2	Strand 3
		Meet with principal and designated observer	Meet with principal
		Develop action plan	Develop personal plan
OCTOBER	First evaluation	First observation	Progress meeting
DECEMBER			
JANUARY	Second evaluation	Second observation	
APRIL	Third evaluation	Third observation	Progress meeting
MAY	Summative report	Review meeting	Review meeting
JUNE		Teacher submits signed report to Central office	Teacher submits signed report to Central office

A second concern was the apparent lack of communication between classroom and resource room teachers in the development and implementation of Individual Education Programs [IEP], and the exclusion of parents from this process. Accordingly, a protocol was developed which includes teachers, guidance counsellors, parents and the student in the development of an IEP, sets strict timelines for placement in a resource room program, and requires teachers to work closely with resource room teachers in the delivery of the IEP. Figure 7 describes this process in detail. To date teacher satisfaction with the model has been high and we will review the process after it has been implemented for a full school year. This protocol will result in the abolition of the concept that resource rooms are a "dumping ground" in which students can be left for an extended period of time. Rather, classroom and resource teachers will work together to develop and implement a structured program for each individual, and will assess the results of this program after a six week placement.

Figure 7 : The LLRIB model for referring a student to the resource room


Continuous instruction and assessment
Teachers identifies a problem
Teacher implements strategies to overcome the problem
SUCCESSFUL?
UNSUCCESSFUL?
Teacher meets with the resource room teacher
Teacher, with guidance from resource room teacher, completes a referral form which indicates:
• student's strengths and weaknesses (academic, social, physical)
• social interaction patterns
• attendance patterns
• medical problems and/or physical disabilities
• writing sample(s)
• attitude
• strategies previously attempted by the teacher
Teacher, resource room teacher, and (if possible) parent, develop an Individual Education Plan
I.E.P. placed in student's file, with copies to Teacher, Resource Room Teacher, Parent
Resource Room Teacher implements I.E.P.
Teacher focusses on similar skills during regular program
Teacher, resource room teacher, and (if possible) parent meet after 6 weeks and review I.E.P.
Student is returned to the classroom

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Also of concern was the high drop-out rate of students, particularly in the middle years (grades 6 - 9). Of the total school age population, a statistical survey discovered that 750 Band members of school age were not enrolled in educational programs (Goddard, 1991b). This, in part, was traced to an inconsistent policy on student promotion and retention in grade which had inadvertently encouraged students to leave school (Kalyn, 1991). In some schools academic achievement was the main criterion for grade advancement. High rates of absenteeism, often the result of students spending extended periods of time on the family trapline, sometimes led to developmental delay and resulted in numbers of older children with limited academic skills being placed in classrooms full of younger children. Many of these children subsequently left school without completing their elementary education. To combat this problem, some schools instigated a social promotion strategy, where children were moved from grade to grade with their peer group. This model recognized the Band philosophy that trapline activities were valid learning experiences and prevented excessive gaps in age/grade placements. Unfortunately the students often met the 'brick wall' of the provincial grade 10 credit program without the necessary academic preparation and, subsequently, left school without completing the requirements for graduation.

A policy was developed and implemented which established criteria and timelines for 'student at-risk' intervention practices and which placed the decision on whether or not a student should be retained in grade in the hands of the parents. Through the greater involvement of parents in decisions affecting their child(ren) it is hoped that a more frequent and positive dialogue between home and school will be established and nurtured. This policy was introduced at the beginning of the 1991-1992 school year. Figure 8 outlines the policy and the procedures related to this policy. All school staff were provided with a short inservice to acquaint them with the policy and this will be reinforced at the system-wide sharing day in January 1992. The process will be closely monitored and will be reviewed at the end of the school year.

A related issue which became apparent was that no concerted effort had been made to accumulate data on school leavers, whether graduates or drop-outs / push-outs. In order to determine the actual numbers of school leavers and to develop a tracking system for these students, and to attempt to bridge the gap (or rather, chasm) between the school and postschool environments, a submission for a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council grant was prepared and submitted (Goddard & Kalyn, 1991). If this submission is successful then the

Figure 8 : The LLRIB policy and procedures concerning retention in grade

GRADE RETENTION POLICY

A student may only repeat a grade from Nursery to Grade 9 at the request of his/her parent(s) and/or guardian(s).

PROCEDURES

If a teacher is of the opinion that a student, by virtue of either poor attendance and/or poor achievement, is insufficiently prepared for success in the next grade, then that teacher shall:

(1) make every effort to encourage the student and provide opportunities, through access to special tutoring, the resource teacher, and/or other services which are deemed appropriate, to allow the student to succeed;

(2) inform the parent(s) and/or guardian(s), at the earliest opportunity, of his/her concerns;

(3) inform the guidance counsellor, in writing and at the earliest opportunity, of his/her concerns and request appropriate student counselling, home visits, and/or other measures as required;

(4) inform the Principal, in writing, of his/her concerns no later than 1 March;

(5) arrange for a case conference to be scheduled, to be attended by the teacher, Principal, resource teacher and/or guidance counsellor, parent(s) and/or guardian(s) and student; and

(6) arrange for the case conference to be scheduled to take place no later than 15 April.

At the case conference, the teacher shall outline his/her concern(s) and recommendation(s). The Principal shall chair the case conference and ensure that all points of view are discussed.

The decision as to whether the student shall repeat the grade or move on to the next grade will be made by the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the student.

The parent(s) or guardian(s) will inform the Principal of their decision within seven days of the date of the case conference.

LLRIB will work with the University of Saskatchewan to conduct preliminary research into this area of concern. The first intent of this research study will be to collect the data required for the analysis of the school leaver situation and to develop a tracking system for LLRIB students. The second intent is to collect the data necessary to identify resources and develop strategies which will provide support to LLRIB members who are in that transitional stage between the school and postschool environments. The third intent is to assess the data collected and determine whether a more comprehensive research project is required to collect all the information.

A fourth concern was the apparent low status of Cree language and Cree culture within the school program. This view was reinforced by a program review (Highway, 1991) and the administration of a language dominance test to kindergarten students (Eby, 1977; Neufeld, 1991). Neufeld found that of 21 kindergarten students tested, only 7 could be considered fluent in Cree and 4 had no comprehension of the language. The remainder of the children had various levels of Cree comprehension between the two extremes. This was a surprising discovery for the LLRIB, as all the children tested are from a community which prides itself on the strength and vitality of the Cree language and culture, a pride reinforced by a sociolinguistic survey which concluded that "the Cree language appears to be healthy at Stanley Mission" (Saskatchewan Indigenous Languages Committee, 1991, p. 136). This assumption must now be questioned. The loss of a vernacular language within one or two generations, or diglossia (Dorais, 1989), is well documented. The LLRIB focus on the necessity of maintaining the Cree language will perhaps serve to reverse this trend. A Cree Culture Facilitator was hired to provide system wide support to teachers involved in the teaching of Cree language and culture.

The Curriculum Resource Unit is also working on a number of major projects which will incorporate cultural themes and activites within the school program. Although high school credit classes in Cree have been developed and implemented, and indeed have received recognition from Saskatchewan Education as approved credit courses, the elementary program is not standardized. To address this situation a Cree language dictionary is being developed, as are Cree language activity handbooks and integrated units which combine Cree and English perspectives on a variety of themes. Efforts are also underway to develop a system-wide Cree immersion program at the K-2 level and, eventually, a full Cree curricula from K-9 . Of caution to educators, however, is the view of a vocal minority group within the communities. This group believes that Cree is strong in the home and that first language acquisition should remain a parental

responsibility. According to this group, the schools should focus on English language teaching as this is the way to future economic and social prosperity. Other parents disagree and believe that it is the role of the school to ensure the maintenance and survivial of the Cree language. According to this group, the school should reflect the local cultural identity of the community and should not be simply a replica of those schools which existed prior to the advent of Band controlled education. This dichotomy must be addressed at the community level and public meetings to discuss the issue are being planned for later in the year.

A related concern was the perceived lack of curriculum development generally. The LLRIB has a bilingual and bicultural approach to education and a stated philosophy that pride, culture, skills and values (LLRIB, 1988) should be integrated within all subject areas at the N - 9 levels. However, this is perceived to exist only on paper and the cautions of Cummings (n.d.) on the effectiveness of bilingual programs have not been examined. Curriculum development committees, with appropriate release time and resources to hire substitute teachers, have been established to examine these issues and to review and revise the LLRIB Integrated Curriculum Guide (Roberts & Goddard, 1991). This process will also allow for new provincial curriculum initiatives, such as the Common Essential Learnings (Saskatchewan Education, 1988), to be incorporated into the LLRIB curriculum. Further, the integration of Native and western conceptual paradigms (i.e. Colorado, 1988; King,1991) will allow for curricula to include 'the best of both worlds' and help prepare students for life both on and off the reserves.

This duality of purpose is extremely important if the distinctiveness of First Nations' schools is to be maintained. Although the LLRIB wishes to achieve excellence in its educational programs it does not believe that this necessarily requires the simultaneous loss of cultural identity. Indeed it is the position of the Band that excellence will only be achieved if cultural identity is visible and maintained, for what is the purpose of having educational self-governance if the Band system then simply reflects that of the majority culture. The reality is that Band controlled schools are not provincially mandated or controlled. Although the LLRIB wants its members to achieve at or beyond provincial expectations it does not want this process to cause it's schools to lose the distinctive nature of a Band controlled program.

Another major concern identified through DWIP was the lack of consistent expectations for student performance. These issues are also being addressed through various working committees

and will lead to the establishment of common core subject examinations at the grades 6 and 9 levels and the empowerment of teachers, community members and school committee members within the educational system. One committee is developing system-wide examinations in the core subjects, to be administered at the Grade 6 and Grade 9 levels. These examinations will form but one part of the assessment process and will not be used, in isolation, to determine whether a child should be promoted or retained in grade. Questions pertaining to "the usefulness of multiple-choice tests, the cultural bias of tests, "teaching to the test", and the lack of plan to improve poor test scores" (Jennings, 1991, p. 3) are being considered during the development and construction of the examinations.

The examinations will be prepared by teachers and will consist of a variety of different question formats. Although multiple-choice questions will no doubt be included, so will such question-forms as cloze readings, short answer, matching terms and definitions, long answer and essays. The questions will rely not only upon the recall of factual information but will also include the application of knowledge, problem solving, comparison, substitution, analysis, comprehension and other skills. The examinations themselves will be viewed as an integral but not exclusive part of the assessment process. Teachers will therefore incorporate examination results within a whole range of continuous assessment strategies (i.e. projects, weekly tests and quizzes, assignments, portfolios and so forth) to provide a valid final assessment.

There should be no cultural bias in our examinations, which are predicated on the cultural reality of a unicultural Cree student body. Unlike other tests there is no national norm against which our students shall be compared. Rather, the comparison will be within the enrolment of the system. This process will allow the Band to identify those objectives wich are considered, by teachers and community alike, to be the key objectives for each core subject at specific grade levels. Subsequently, this process will allow the Band to determine the success or otherwise of the teaching and learning processes experienced by the students.

We shall minimize 'teaching to the test' by structuring the examination around the conceptual and skill based objectives of the subject at that specific grade. Thus we shall be 'testing to the teaching' instead of teaching to the test. A plan is in place to improve poor test scores, should any occur, and was developed on the premise that a poor test score identifies a weakness in the teaching and learning process which must be isolated and remediated. The LLRIB agrees with the

comment that "when test scores alone force children to repeat a grade, children are not well served" (Jervis, 1991, p.4) and it must be noted that no student will be retained in grade simply because of a poor examination. The student who is unsuccessful in an examination will be provided with a resource program, tutors and other counselling activities with the aim that specific weaknesses have been identified through the examination and can be overcome.

The LLRIB, in moving towards the development of a standardized examination system at certain key points in the education process, is reflecting developments in the international arena. Countries such as the United States (Jennings, 1991), France and England (Gozzer, 1990) are also attempting to identify key objectives at different stages of the K-12 program and to develop national tests which relate to these objectives. On a smaller scale, the Band is attempting to determine the level of success experienced by the students through the teaching and learning processes implemented by the teachers. It is believed that only by the introduction of a common examination system can a rational, objective criterion be introduced into what may otherwise be a wholly subjective evaluation process.

Related to both the preceeding issues was the concern that the LLRIB operates in a vacuum insofar as comparisons with other educational programs are concerned. The DWIP results indicated a need for the LLRIB to arrange for an objective, external evaluation of its programs in an effort to determine how they compare with LLRIB goals and with programs in other jurisdictions. Arrangements have been made with INAC (Regina) to conduct a comprehensive series of school and program reviews, a procedure already mandated under the Alternate Funding Agreement signed between the Band and the federal government. This process, which might correctly be termed an audit, will take place between January and June of 1992 and is viewed as a necessary extension of the DWIP project. The reports of these reviews will, when considered together with the results of the DWIP surveys, principal's monthly reports and other Band generated documentation, provide the LLRIB with the data required to continue the review and revision of the 5 year plan.

Another area of concern was the belief that not all students who require special help receive the appropriate assistance. The LLRIB is proud of its special education programs and feels that the needs of most of those students who are designated as 'high cost' are being met (Goddard, 1991a). There remain, however, many students who require a wide range of intervention

strategies that the LLRIB is unable to provide. Through a series of shared contribution agreements all Bands within the PATC assist in the funding of various centralized programs, including access to a number of consultants. From the LLRIB perspective, however, this system has its weaknesses as the PATC model appears to replicate the centralized and bureaucratic INAC model it replaced. There still appears to be a focus on management strategies which serve to control the options available to the Bands. The LLRIB would prefer a decentralized model which stresses the utilization of scarce resources to provide those support services needed to meet school and classroom needs while leaving the management functions at the Band level. Such a model is not in place at this time.

The Band continues to attempt to access the resources necessary to hire speech and language pathologists, speech therapists and other special needs support personnel. Unfortunately the federal Department of Indian Health and Medical Services refuses to accept this type of assistance as a medical problem and refer all enquiries to INAC-Education staff. They, in turn, maintain that these funds have been decentralized to the Tribal Councils. The PATC, having to deal with the needs of twelve member Bands, has prioritized staffing to meet the needs of the majority and thus has no spare funding to hire additional consultants. The LLRIB continues to attempt to access funding to provide these urgently required services.

A ninth area of concern was the need for extra support staff, and for more funding to be made available to provide staff training programs. As the enrolment in LLRIB schools continues to grow at a rate faster than new facilities can be constructed so one outcome is increased class size and a higher pupil-teacher ratio. One way to combat this is through the employment of teacher aides. The LLRIB has funded the delivery of two parts of a three level Teacher Aide training program, offered in conjunction with Northlands College. The third level will be offered in 1992. All uncertified Band education staff are required to take this program and have been joined by a number of teacher aides from other Band and provincial schools. The continued success of this and other training programs, and the continued hiring of additional staff, relies upon expanded funding agreements with INAC.

Another concern related to funding was identified as being the perceived centralization of the budget process. Although the total budget is set at the system level, the actual prioritization of this funding has been decentralized to schools. It is perceived that principals do not adequately

involve staff in the setting of budget priorities. LLRIB principals have been made aware of this concern and requested to involve a greater number of staff in the process for the next fiscal year.

Also of concern was the perception that overall funding levels for education are insufficient. Although over 80% of the replies from members of the Band Council and School Committees agreed with the statement that "there is adequate funding for quality education", only 37% of teaching staff concurred. The LLRIB has determined to examine this discrepancy and identify the cause. This problem may be the result of teachers only being aware of classroom issues while councillors and school committee members are aware of overall funding. Alternatively, it may be that budget decentralization has resulted in an unequal distribution of funds and that classroom teachers are not receiving their "fair share". The budget development and expenditure process will be reviewed to determine where (and how) funds are spent and program heads will be required to justify their budget allocations.

The isolation of individual School Committees from each other, and the lack of community involvement in the decision making process, was the final area of concern. In the past an Ad Hoc Committee of school committee chairpersons was established but only met on an irregular basis. There was no formal mechanism in place whereby school committees could meet and share ideas, concerns and knowledge. Also there was no group, formal or informal, with a mandate to develop, review and revise policy, manage overall educational operations, establish and monitor the budget, hire and fire staff, and so forth. These functions were all integrated into the general responsibilities of the Band Council, together with similar responsibilities for identical functions in all other program areas.

The annual school committee retreat and conference was reinstituted. This three day meeting is held in a neutral community and allows the members of the different school committees to meet and mingle through a series of planned workshops and social events. The Ad Hoc Committee, with representation from each of the six LLRIB School Committees, has been revitalized and is discussing the validity and effectiveness of developing an Education Authority to govern the operations of theLLRIB education system. Such a body, if one is implemented, would have certain responsibilities delegated to it by the Chief and Band Council. The scope and mandate of such an Education Authority, and the powers devolved to it, will be the subject of much discussion over

the coming months. In the interim the Ad Hoc Committee has invited the two Band councillors with education portfolios to attend its meetings and provide input into the developmental process. The eleven issues described above are also discussed at Ad Hoc Committee meetings in order to improve lines of communication and better inform staff, parents and community members of the steps the LLRIB is taking to improve its school system.

The Band is also addressing the dichotomy which exists with regard to the school-postschool environments. This is believed to be a false dichotomy. The Ad Hoc and other Band committees are examining transitional strategies which might be impelmented with the goal of facilitating a seamless movement between the K-12 program and postschool alternatives. This process is required because, at the present time, there is little or no linkage between the school program and the non-university options available to students. The situation is exacerbated by the pending devolution of post-secondary education and adult training responsibilities to the First Nations. The LLRIB believes that all aspects of the education process, from pre-school centres to special programs for adults wishing to upgrade their technical or academic knowledge, are part of a continuum of learning which should all be part of the Band's education system.

The model of school improvement implemented by the LLRIB is similar to that applied in the Outer Hebrides (Coombs, 1985), Papua New Guinea (Guthrie, 1980) and other jurisdictions which have attempted to recover their cultural identity after years of being subject to a system of education imposed by a colonial power. This process involves making schools more sensitive to the environment within which they exist. In a First Nations community the environment is not restricted to the real or physical (resources, facilities, people, etc.) but also includes the abstract and metaphysical (cultural paradigms, Aboriginal world-views, kinship and other human relationships, and so forth). Therefore new paradigms of effectiveness are required.

In addressing the human, technical and conceptual processes of education (Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs & Thurston, 1980) through a systematic, decentralized and 'bottom-up' series of school improvement initiatives the LLRIB is attempting to follow Brameld's dictum that "the effective school works with, not against, its environment" (1955, p.155). Any attempt to develop and implement school improvement plans must incorporate the abstract as well as the concrete if the process is to be successful. It is not sufficient to simply transplant a process developed for mainstream society into a First Nations environment. The school improvement

model implemented by the LLRIB hopes to overcome the effects of a past quasi-colonial system and improve academic standards while maintaining the cultural uniqueness of the Cree Nation.

It is difficult, after such a short period of time, to determine how successful these initiatives will be or to quantify their overall effect on the LLRIB education program. In two specific areas we are finding positive trends which might be a manifestation of increased success throughout the system. If so, these may be the result of steps taken to address the concerns raised through the responses to the DWIP needs assessment surveys.

The enrolment at LLRIB school has shown a dramatic increase. The 1990-1991 nominal roll was for 765 students. Based on the average over the past 5 years we have anticipated an enrolment increase of approximately 75 students, with another 58 students expects to remain in school due to three grade extensions we were offering in 1991. The projected enrolment for 1991-1992, therfore, was 898; in fact, the nominal roll for 1991-1992 was 956, an increase of 191 students over the previous year and of 58 students over the projected enrolment. Further study is required to determine whether this increase reflects an improved confidence in the education system, more adults returning to school, or an unusually high influx of new residents into reserve communities, or some other reason.

Another, albeit less dramatic, increase has also been recorded in student attendance. The period from August to October 1991 showed an average student attendance, system-wide, of 90.44%. This is an increase of 2.07% over the corresponding period in 1990 when the system average was 88.37%. The continuing analysis of attendance patterns will serve to show whether or not this improvement is maintained.

Our first impressions, therefore, are that the strategies for school improvement implemented by the LLRIB have been a success. It would appear that we are attracting a greater number of students into our K-12 program and that these students are attending school on a more regular basis. Over the next few years we will continue to monitor our programs, to develop policies which reflect community aspirations and local needs, to increase our expectations for students and staff, and to continually improve all aspects of the education process within this First Nations environment.

References

Bacchus, M.K. (1987). Educational policy and development strategy in the Third World. Aldershot, UK : Avebury.

Brameld, T. (1955). Philosophies of education in cultural perspective. New York, NY : Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

British Columbia Ministry of Education. (1990). British Columbia primary-intermediate accreditation manual. Victoria, BC : Author.

Campbell, J. (1991). Analysis of Lac La Ronge Indian Band population statistics as of April 21, 1991. Report to the Chief and Council, October 10, 1991. La Ronge, SK : Lac La Ronge Indian Band.

Castetter, W.B. (1986) The personnel function in educational administration (4th. ed.). New York, NY : Macmillan Publishing Company.

Colorado, P. (1988). Bridging Native and western science. Convergence, 21 (2/3), 49-68.

Coombs, P.H. (1985). The world crisis in education. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press.

Cummings, J. (n.d.). Empowering minority students. Toronto, ON : Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Cutler, N. (1989). Small schools - small district. Newfoundland Teachers' Association Professional Development Journal, 76 (1), 3-5.

Dorais, L-J. (1989). Bilingualism and diglossia in the Canadian Eastern Arctic. Arctic, 42 (3), 199-207.

Eby, C. (1977). The Cree language competency test. Not known.

Giles, T.E., & Proudfoot, A.J. (1984). Educational administration in Canada (3rd. ed.). Calgary, AB : Detsilig Enterprises Ltd.

Glickman, C. D. (1989). School based instructional improvement. Seminar presented for the Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit, University of Saskatchewan, April 21 & 22, 1989.

Goddard, J. T. (1988). An historical overview of the events leading to Band control of education in Northern Saskatchewan. Unpublished term paper, Indian and Northern Education Program, University of Saskatchewan.

Goddard, J. T. (1991a). Indian control of special education. Rehabilitation Digest, 22 (2), 8.

Goddard, J. T. (1991b). Superintendent of Education's Report. Report to the Chief and Council, October 10, 1991. La Ronge, SK : Lac La Ronge Indian Band.

Goddard, J. T., & Kalyn, P. (1991). Strategic Grant Submission to the Social Studies and Humanities Research Council of Canada. La Ronge, SK : Lac La Ronge Indian Band.

Goldade, L. (1991). Personal correspondence, October 1991.

Gozzer, G. (1990). School curricula and social problems. Prospects, 20 (1), 9-19.

Guthrie, G. (1980). Day high schools. ERU Research Report No. 34. Port Moresby, PNG : University of Papua New Guinea.

Highway, R. (1991). Report on the Cree language and Cree culture program, Lac La Ronge Indian Band. Prince Albert, SK : Prince Albert Tribal Council.

Hyman, R. (1986). School administrator's faculty supervison handbook. Englewood Cliffs, NJ : Prentice-Hall.

INAC. (1991). Lac La Ronge Indian Band population statistics as of April 21, 1991. Regina, SK : Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

Jennings, J.F. (1991). Major education bills in the Congress. Phi Delta Kappa Legislative Newsletter, 1 (1), 1-4.

Jervis, K. (1991). Closed gates in a New York City school, In V. Perrone (Ed.), Expanding student assessment, pp. 1-21. Alexandria, VA : Association of Supervison and Curriculum Development.

Kalyn, P. (1991). Skills training : A Lac La Ronge Band pilot project. Report to the Chief and Council, October 10, 1991. La Ronge, SK : Lac La Ronge Indian Band.

King, C. (1991). A different worldview. Paper presented at the first Lac La Ronge Indian Band and Saskatoon District Tribal Council Education Conference, La Ronge, 27 September, 1991.

Kouri, K.T. (1983). The myth of Indian control of Indian education. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Toronto.

LLRIB. (1988). Integrated Curriculum Guide (2nd. ed.). La Ronge, SK : Cultural Resource Unit, Lac La Ronge Indian Band.

Mercredi, O. (October 2, 1991). Letter to the Honourable Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister of Canada.

More, A.J. (1984). Quality of education of Native Indian students in Canada. Paper presented to the Mokakit Indian Research Conference, London, Ontario.

National Study of School Evaluation. (1983). K-12 school evaluative criteria : A guide for school improvement. Falls Church, VA : Author.

Neufeld, M. (1991). Report on Cree langauge dominance among kindergarten students at Keethanow School, Stanley Mission. Paper presented to the Stanley Mission School Committee.

Onion Lake Indian Band. (May 30, 1990). Report of the sub-committee on the school audit process. Paper presented to the Directors of Education, Meadow Lake Tribal Council.

PATC. (1990). Prince Albert Tribal Council District Wide Improvement Plan. Prince Albert, SK : Author.

Roberts, V., & Goddard, J.T. (1991). (Eds.). In pursuit of excellence : The Lac La Ronge Indian Band Education Branch information booklet 1991-1992. La Ronge, SK : Lac La Ronge Indian Band.

Saskatchewan Education. (1988). Understanding the Common Essential Learnings : A handbook for teachers. Regina, SK : Author.

Saskatchewan Education. (1989). Saskatchewan School Improvement Program questionnaire. Regina, SK : Author.

Saskatchewan Indian Education Act. (1984). Regina, SK : Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations.

Saskatchewan Indigenous Languages Committee. (1991). Sociolinguistic survey of indigenous languages in Saskatchewan : On the critical list. Saskatoon, SK : University of Saskatchewan.

Scharf, M., et al. (1987). Report to the Minister of Education on school governance in Northern Saskatchewan. Regina, SK : Government of Saskatchewan.

Sergiovanni, T.J., Burlingame, M., Coombs, F.D., & Thurston, P.W. (1980). Educational governance and administration. Englewood Cliffs, NJ : Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Smith, J.K., & Blase, J. (1991). From empiricism to hermeneutics : Educational leadership as a practical and moral activity. Journal of Educational Administration, 29 (1), 6-21.

Sparkes, A.C. (1991). The culture of teaching, critical reflection and change : Possibilities and problems. Educational Management and Administration, 19 (1), 4-19.

Watson, K., & Watson, V. (1983). Indian Education Project, Volume 4 : Curricula in Indian schools. Ottawa, ON : INAC.